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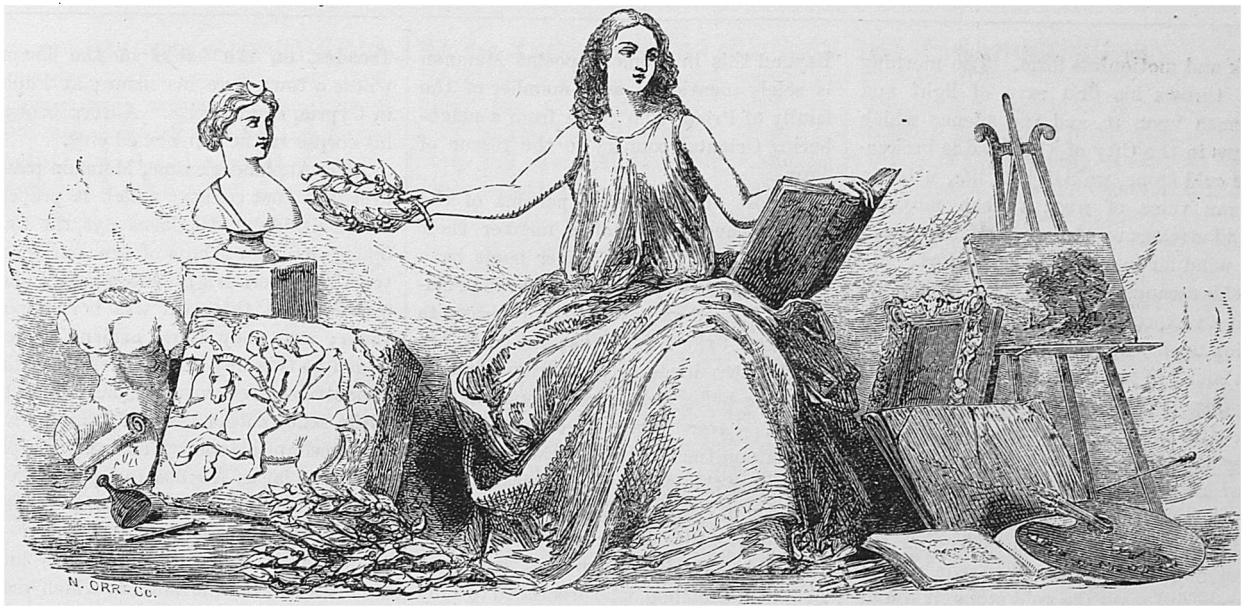
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THE SOUNDING STATUE OF MEMNON.

WHO has not heard of the sounding statue of Memnon of old, which, shrinking during the long and silent hours of night, sent its moaning voice forth when the rays of the rising sun lighted upon its granite front? Mankind are fond of paradox; contradictions act with a strange charm upon human nature. Generation after generation passes away, regretting the dreamy days of infancy, and craving for other sunset stories, and other fairy-tales, to think and dream of amidst the contentions of manhood and the diseases of old age. The unlikely thought is the most probable; and things impossible are for that reason eagerly believed. In the heart of mankind there is a leaning to untruth. A lie finds ready believers, where a truth looks vainly for credit. Mohammed died as king; Christ as malefactor. The most zealous votaries are those of error, and minds which have fallen a prey to a really unreasonable prejudice are not to be won over. While we smile at the tenacity with which people in former times clung to false notions and untrue ideas, we should, perhaps, be more tenacious of them if they were handed down to us. There are few of us who would not have sent Galileo to the stake; and very few of us who would like

to lose that beautiful tale of Memnon of Egypt, and of his sounding statue.

History, as it is taught in our schools, is an odd mixture of anecdotes and fables, which the pupil gets by rote, as the master got them, and which, according to individual disposition, are in after-life remembered or forgotten. Some only adhere to the mind; a few anecdotes, a few fables, seem destined for universal remembrance: they cling to the memory; they haunt our dreams; if the torrent of events roll over them, they will rise from the waters after many days; they will be as clear and bright before the mind as in the hour when the pleasing tale first fell on the wondering ear of childhood.

Egypt is the land of mysteries; it is the land of the dead, where vast cities are built for them beneath the surface of the earth; where they have dwelt some thousands of years in uninterrupted silence and in darkness. All its grandeur and splendor are devoted to the mystery of the grave. Its mighty temples, its rock-built palaces, its stupendous fanes; the pyramids that rear their labyrinthine structures heavenward; their obelisks, gigantic monuments of men that had lived—are all but different kinds of graves. They are the habitations of the dead, who, like the silkworm, had passed their lives in preparing a home after death. But Thebes, beyond any other, is the city of the dead. War, devastation, time, have

destroyed her monuments; her temples have crumbled to dust. The City of a Hundred Gates, the oldest among the cities of the earth, which, even in the time of Herodotus was decaying, is now but the City of Ruins.

There is no sound of life among her crumbling fanes, among her broken columns. Beasts of prey walk her streets with noiseless tread; the vulture of the desert swims above in the blue air, but the hoarse tones of his voice die in the distance before they can waken the echoes of a thousand tombs. The wandering Turkoman shrinks from the approach of the city; ghost-like creatures destructive of human life—ghouls, which feed on the flesh and drink the blood of human beings, are said to live within its precincts: the hoofs of his horse tread noiselessly on the yellow sand, while his head is turned toward the desert. Thus had centuries passed in silence over the City of Ruins and of the dead, were it not for one voice. On the plain of Thebes, close to her crumbled walls, there towers a gigantic human form to the skies. It is a colossal statue of granite; it represents a man in a sitting posture, with his hands resting on his thighs. The guardian spirit of that vast city is frozen into bleak black stone in viewing its desolation, and thus it sits, an eternal witness of eternal ruin. Years—many years—have come and gone; the sun of the evening still sets upon that

dark and motionless form. The morning sun throws his first rays of light and warmth upon it, and the silence which reigns in the City of the Dead is broken. The cold stone, waking into life, utters a human voice of woe; a deep moaning sound streams on the wings of the morning wind far into the Libyan desert.

This moaning, how is it to be explained? Is it an expression of sorrow at the desolation upon which a new day shines? Is it a sound of joy when the light of morning dispels the frore shades of night? To the Greeks it was the last. Memnon—thus they held—a son of Aurora, sacrificed his life at the siege of Troy, where he sided with Priam against the Greeks. This statue in the plain of Thebes was dead and silent; but when the rays of Aurora fell upon the cold stone, it sounded an harmonious welcome to the goddess-mother of Memnon.

Thus in the midst of Egypt, and dating from a time when that mysterious country had no connection whatever with neighboring nations, we find the statue of a Grecian hero, the monument of the son of a Grecian goddess. Thanks to the imaginative powers of their poets, and even of their historians, the Greeks were never embarrassed by the origin of geographical denominations. They had always a store of heroes and heroines, whose names were derived from the names which they wanted to explain. These imaginary persons and genealogies are of frequent recurrence in their works, and raise no doubt as to the most fabulous origins,—such as Canopus the founder of Canope, who was said to be pilot to Menelaus; and Pharos, who is said to have made or discovered the isle of Pharos. Pelusium is thus ascribed to Peleus, and Abydos to Abydos.

The Greeks, so well prepared to derive heroes from the names of places, found in Egypt and Ethiopia many vast buildings, which, in the language of the country, were styled Memnonia. They found a town of the name of Anteopolis, which was at once put down as founded by Anteus, the antagonist of Hercules, who was, in order to strengthen the probability, attached to the service of Osiris. The Memnonia were ascribed to Memnon, one the persons in Homer's epics.

Memnon is twice mentioned in the *Odyssey*; once as a son of Aurora, by whose hands Antilochus fell; and the second time as the most beautiful of warriors, and a son of Titho, brother to Priam.

Beyond this in Homer's poems Memnon is solely mentioned as a member of the family of Priam who came from a neighboring Oriental country to the rescue of Troy.

Almost all the poetic persons of the Greeks have in a similar manner their first origin in Homer. Later poets have but enlarged upon their characters and history. Hesiod quotes the son of Aurora as the king of the Ethiopians; the confusion of the two ideas of the Orient and of Ethiopia being perpetual among the ancients. Later poets have based large epopees on the few lines of the great poet. They sing the birth and exploits of Memnon, son of Aurora, killed by the ruthless hand of Achilles under the walls of Troy. Simonides, Pindar, and others, exalt the beautiful Memnon, who proceeded to Troy with an army of Ethiopians. Eschylus, Sophocles, and Theodectes, composed dramas in his honor, the titles of which have alone come down to us. But according to another tradition Memnon's father, Titho, was a Persian chief, who sent his son with 100,000 Ethiopians, as many Susians, and 100,000 battle-cars, to the assistance of Priam, his tributary.

So great a hero must have left monuments on record, and, indeed, a highway in Assyria bore his name. He is also said to have built the walls of Babylon; and according to some authors, it was he who founded Susa. It was there, they report, that he erected a range of magnificent buildings, which have, however, never existed except in the imaginations of poets; and Ctesias, who had vainly inquired for them, tells the travellers they need not trouble themselves with vain researches, these beautiful palaces having been destroyed before the reign of Cyrus. They have, indeed, disappeared like the far-famed tomb of Osymandias, of which no trace remained in the days of Alexander; or that of Porsenna, which in Varro's time existed only in the fabulous traditions of Etruria. But whether the Memnonian palaces of Susa once really existed, or whether they were mere creations of poetic fancy, certain it is that Memnon, or some other person whose deeds were ascribed to him, was so famous that the road from Susa to Troy bore traces of his march. In the days of Pausanias they showed in Phrygia the camp where he had rested with his army. The priests of Esculapius at Nicomedia exhibited his sword. His tomb was in many places; at

Troades, on the banks of the Esepus, where a town bore his name; at Paphos in Cypria, and at Susa. Aurora brought his corpse to the last-named city.

After Alexander's time, Memnon passed over into that country which is properly called Ethiopia. Diodorus says, the Ethiopians of Egypt (those of the south) contest this eastern origin of Memnon. "They pretend that this man was born among them; and they show ancient palaces, which to this day they call Memnonia." Demetrius, an obscure author, tells us that Titho sent another army of Ethiopians to the succor of his son. This army had proceeded as far as Abydos in Upper Egypt, when the news of the hero's death reached them. They immediately stopped on their march, and all the soldiers hung their crowns on the acacias, which decorated the temenos of the temples. This myth is doubtlessly founded on the fact that Abydos, celebrated for her acacia woods and her temple of Osiris, contained buildings which bore the name of Memnonia, and for that reason were ascribed to Memnon.

Another myth dates from this epoch. Poets celebrate certain birds called Memnonides, which sprang from the ashes of Memnon. Among others they are mentioned by Ovid, *Metam.* xvii. 601, *seq.*—

Ab illo

Memnonide dictæ, cum Sol duodena peregit
Signa, parentali peritura, Marte rebeillant.

These birds were said to come at certain seasons of the year to clean the monument of Memnon with great care, and to moisten it with the waters of the Esepus, by dipping their wings into the stream. In Pliny's time it was a current report that the Memnonic birds arrived each year in the middle of Ethiopia to honor the hero. This is said of the Asiatic Memnon; for as to the Ethiopian hero or the same name, whose existence can scarcely be doubted, and of whom Damis affirms that he never had been at Troy, we must at once understand him to be a different person from the hero of Grecian song. The Asiatic Memnon, whom the Grecian poets celebrate, may be a creature of imagination, but the builder or builders of the Memnonia, of those vast buildings of that name which formerly were found in almost all towns of Middle and Upper Egypt, has more substantial evidence for his existence. No Grecian traditions, before their acquaintance with Egypt, tell us of Memnon's exploits in Ethiopia Proper;

but when the Greeks met with the Memnonia they were at once sure that these buildings were erected by the hero of their songs, and, forgetting the purely Asiatic scene of action which their traditions had hitherto assigned to Memnon, they exulted in finding their own hero, the son of one of their goddesses, known and respected among a barbarian nation. Understanding that there were Memnonia at Thebes, they resigned their own Memnon for a mightier one. The Thebans, however, were not so easily convinced. They knew that their Memnonia were but imitations of those Ethiopian buildings which we may safely ascribe to the race of the Pharaohs. Besides, the names of Rameses and Amenophis on the walls of the building were sufficient evidence for them. But it flattered their vanity to think that strangers had retained the memory of the great conquests of their ancient kings, and that the names of the works of art on which they prided themselves should correspond with the name of a foreign demigod and invader. The circumstances of the Greeks transferring their Memnon into Ethiopia Proper, and thus making him a native of Africa, has induced later poets to represent him as black; while the Memnon of the earlier Grecian poets is white, according to his Asiatic origin.

We have allowed the smooth run of Grecian fable to carry us away from the famous sounding Colossus. Memnon has been silent since many hundred years. The voice of the desert is hushed, and travellers listen in vain for the harmony which salutes the break of day. But though it be gone, this sound, this voice of the stone, has occasioned many surmises; many hypotheses have been built upon it. The question, "What occasioned this extraordinary sound?" has long been mooted, and long unanswered. Letronne, the French antiquarian, has, indeed, thrown a new light upon a subject which, up to his time, had been laid in the "double night of ages, and of Night's daughter, Ignorance." On this, as on similar subjects, Speculation has done her best or her worst, and it was time that light should be thrown upon a matter which was obscured by the poetic fancies of many nations and ages. Metaphors will impress on the mind what it already knows; parables will illustrate, but can never explain a fact. An overabundance of them, and on a subject which must be considered with the reflec-

tive eye of criticism, instead of bringing the matter home to the mind, makes us giddy and confused. And though we may regret the day-dreams of youth, when vail after vail falls before us, and the Memnon which existed in our fancy passes away to yield the place to the real Memnon, our regrets will not be lasting. The gain of rational knowledge will make up for the loss in fancy; the loss of poesy will be indemnified by the gains of history. And in history—in the true account of the men and things of former times—lies a deep and solemn poesy. The infancy of nations flies from it; their youth despised it; but verily the stone which the workmen cast aside, that stone has been made the corner-stone upon which the manhood of nations built a shrine of the true Goddess of Poesy.

It is scarcely possible to put any kind of faith in the strange connection which many persons, not poets, but men of study and of science, have thought proper to establish between the statue of Memnon and the *Symbolic* of the Orient. Symbolic as a science is, indeed, one of those pompous expressions in which our own time delights; and this term dispenses people, as they think, from exactly knowing what they say, and under the safeguard of it they attempt to explain to others what they themselves are far from comprehending. Thus Creuzer, a German antiquary of no small reputation, expresses his opinion that the sounding statue of Memnon was meant as a symbol of the limits of day and night; as the annual cycle of Psalms; as the matin-watch or the cycle of the Hores; as the sounding harmony of the Spheres; as an incorporate token of the light eternal; as a dial, indicative of the incarnations of the sun. These and many other interpretations are too beautiful to be true. We may ask, by what means our author arrives at results both so surprising and unprecedented? we are justified in the inquiry from what texts, on vellum or on stone, or from what documents, he collects his knowledge? from what trees he culls such fair fruits? A question of this kind would, perhaps, do more than startle—it would dismay. Forbearing therefore, to trespass upon the acuteness of the feelings of so poetical a mind, we prefer advancing at once the incontrovertible proposition—that whatever Creuzer and the Symbolists of his kind affect to know about the statue of Memnon, and its connection

with the philosophy of Greece and India, must be derived either from the inscriptions on the statue itself, or from the writings of authors who witnessed the miracle of the sounding stone, who knew the opinions of men concerning it, and who, if any hidden meaning were expressed by the statue or its sound, must have been happy to explain the symbolic mystery. Knowledge is not intuitive; it does not enter the mind on the summer winds; it does not fall upon us as the rains of autumn; it must be striven for and gathered from certain fixed-matter-of-fact sources. To prove the symbolic signification of the sounding statue, documents ought to have been produced, quotations to have been made, which supported the statement of Memnon's being meant to indicate the cycle of Psalms, the matin-watch of the Hores, and similar fanciful things. An accidental similarity of sound does not constitute an identity of names, and the critical observer will be cautious how to allow a fortuitous coincidence of trivial facts to vitiate the final result of his investigations. We will now say a few words about the construction of the statue, its position, and its history.

And here we must teach our curiosity to resign the gratification of beholding the first formation of the state, of the laws, of the institutions of Egypt. To expect this would be to expect the impossible. It is not so with other nations. Though obscured by tradition, though falsified by poetic fables, yet we see how a poor and needy tribe of freebooters and robbers congregate on the Latian hills, we witness their first rude attempts at religion, at public safety and government. We behold their faculties gradually developing, we see their fates assuming a greater importance; we follow each step in their career, and when the powers of the world fall into the dust before the almost omnipotent will of the "Senatus Populusque Romanus," we glory in the result, as though it had been brought about by our own agency. The fabric of their political greatness has been constructed under our own eyes; the broad light of historic day has shone upon it. Of other nations history has been silent, until they forced themselves into her pages. The tribes of Huns and Tartars, who from time to time have overrun and ransacked the *historical* nations, obtained commemoration during the time only that they did so.

Their fates had been unrecorded before they trod upon historic ground, and remained unrecorded from the moment they left it. But the case of Egypt is anomalous in the extreme. She had become civilized before she reasoned on her civilization; she performed actions, and immediately lost the consciousness of them. The long and inaccurate lists of her earlier kings, which the priests drew up for Herodotus, do not make a history; royal names by themselves are mere sounds. They have no power to explain, to elucidate, to record. The history of Egypt dates from the time that the first Grecian pirates landed on her coasts. It is from that time that her fates are recorded, but also that her decline is dated. Thus in Egypt we see a nation entering upon the historical stage not to form itself, but to lose in substance; not to consolidate, but to decay. The curtain rising from before them displays a firmly-organized nation, whose customs, whose laws, whose religion, solid and fixed as they are, seem to have thus existed since the beginning of Time; for there is no trace to indicate *how* they were formed, and from what they grew. A country is thrust forward upon the scene, with towns already built; with idols that would appear never to have lacked a temple; with royal palaces already crumbling with age; and with tombs of marvellous magnitude, filled with a host of time-dried corpses. And Thebes, *then* no longer the capital of that mysterious country, was beginning to fall into ruins. Among the giant monuments of that extraordinary town, there were *two* colossal statues found on the plain outside the walls; two towering figures, which the traveller's curious eye may to this day behold, and be awed by the thought of this seeming eternity in stone. These two colosses bear at first sight a striking resemblance to each other; they have the same position, the same height, and the same substance. But on closer examination an essential difference becomes apparent. The one, standing to southward, consists from the head to the feet of one single block of stone. The colossus of the north is, on the contrary, composed of two distinct parts: the first, reaching from the feet up to the middle of the thighs, is one entire piece of granite; the second, comprising the whole upper part, is composed of thirteen blocks in five layers. These blocks are not of the same substance as the monolithic part; they consist of that kind of

sandstone of which the palace and temples of Thebes are built. Even if we had no historical evidence to direct us, we could not but see in this the restoration of some later period. Every Egyptian colossus, whatever its size, was uniformly of one entire block of stone; and there can be no doubt but that this divided colossus was originally, like the other, formed of one single piece of granite, and that the upper part, being broken by some accident, was at a later period rebuilt with such materials as were nearest at hand.

This is proved not only by the texts of Strabo and Pausanias, but also by some inscriptions on the statue itself. Strabo (who travelled in Egypt between the years of nineteen and seven before Christ) says: "Of the two monolithic colosses one is entire; one is broken in the middle, and the upper half is fallen—they say, in consequence of an earthquake." Pausanias, speaking of this statue, says likewise: "The upper part, from the head to the loins, is fallen down, but the rest is upright." The journey of Pausanias to Egypt falls into the reign of Hadrian, and between the years 130 and 138. At another place, speaking of a sounding stone, he says: "This appeared marvellous unto me; but what astonished me more was the Egyptian colossus, which one sees at Thebes in Egypt, after having passed the Nile, on the road to the royal tombs. I have, indeed, there beheld a *sounding statue*, which is commonly hight Memnon; but the Thebans pretend that this statue represents not Memnon, but Pamenophus, a native of that country. There are also people who believe that this statue, which they say was mutilated by Cambyzes, is that of Sesostris." Juvenal, too, gives a faithful and poetical picture of this state of the statue:—

Dimidio magicæ resonant ubi Memnone chordæ;

but he abstains from mentioning the *cause* of the fracture; concerning which there were two different reports—an earthquake, and the violence of Cambyzes. Both were traditional when Hadrian travelled in Egypt; but the later tradition has been adopted by Julius Africanus in his *Chronicles*, by Eusebius and Syncellus, and by other compilers of more modern date. Consequently it is to this day the general opinion. Nevertheless we have many reasons to doubt the correctness of the statement, and prefer the report which Strabo quotes. It is to be consid-

ered, that neither Strabo nor Pausanias gives his own opinion: they merely record the information they received on the spot. If, then, the report, according to which Cambyzes was said to have broken the statue, were authentic, the colossus must have been broken above five hundred years when Strabo visited it. But when Strabo was at Thebes he was assured that Cambyzes, whom the Egyptians even then held in great detestation, had broken *almost all* the public monuments and statues, excepting always this colossus, which it was distinctly stated owed its mutilation to an earthquake. Cambyzes was the eternal scape-goat of the Thebans: the ruins of time and negligence were ascribed to him; and the real cause of the mutilation of the statue must, in Strabo's time, have been well known, to induce them to state any other cause than the atrocious barbarity of the ruthless spoiler. If there had been any doubt whatever as to the reason why the statue was broken, they would gladly have charged Cambyzes with it; as indeed they failed not to do, when a hundred and fifty years later under Hadrian, the natural and real cause had sunk into oblivion.

Now it happens, that but a few years before the journey of Strabo, Thebes had been devastated by a terrific earthquake. Eusebius, speaking of it, places it in the 188th Olympiad, or the sixteenth year of the reign of Augustus, or twenty-seven years before the birth of Christ. "Thebæ Egypti," such are his words, "usque ad solum dirutæ sunt,"*—an expression which is evidently exaggerated. The time between this earthquake and Strabo's journey was from fifteen to twenty years. The earthquake had been recent and terrific—sufficient reasons to be remembered. That so large and heavy a colossus should have been broken, when the other statue, and even the town of Thebes, remained undestroyed, might admit of a doubt, were it not for the observations which Mr. Rozières has made on the action of the climate on the granite in that country, where the violent and sudden changes of the temperature will enlarge the fissures of granite-blocks.

The fact, then, that the northward statue on the plain of Thebes has at one time been broken, is established beyond a doubt. Yet we see the statue restored, and the question naturally arises, "By

* Euseb. Chron. ad S. Hieron. r. p. 154.

whom, and when, was it done?" There is in reality *no* ancient text which fixes the time of the restoration of the statue. Heeren* conjectures that it took place under Septimius Severus, and by his order. The extent and the difficulty of the operation made it very expensive. It was nevertheless so well executed that the Egyptians, in the most devoted times of their history, and fired by all the fervor of pious zeal, could not have done it better. They could not have restored the column otherwise than it was done in the Roman period, by means of layers of blocks of stone, which were subsequently shaped by the hammer and the chisel, in imitation of the neighboring colossus, or rather of the ancient broken part, which in the time of Pausanias lay still on the ground. The size of these blocks is very considerable; the smallest of them, forming the head and neck, is ten feet high and nine feet thick; and they had to raise it about fifty feet from the ground. Skill and precision were moreover required to fix these blocks on the sloping surface of the fracture.

But so confused have been the notions, so contradictory the statements, respecting this celebrated statue, that pompous superficiality has even dared to construct a whole fabric of hypotheses on some passage in the ancient authors, even when their object was less to instruct than to amuse. Thus the restoration of the statue of Memnon has been doubted on the ground of its having never been broken. And upon what testimony has this doubt been raised? On the evidence of a fanciful personage of Lucian, whom the author himself most unequivocally introduces as "*Encrates, the friend of lies*." This humorous character is made to say: "In my youth while I was in Egypt, I went to hear Memnon's voice at the rising of the sun. I did hear it; but not as usual, an inarticulate sound, such as he is wont to utter to the common herd. No, Memnon, opening his *mouth*, pronounced an oracle in seven verses, which I would repeat to you if it were not forbidden." We should be wrong to conclude from this assertion of Memnon having opened his mouth, that he really was in possession of his head. Lucian, who knew Egypt, placed this passage expressly in the mouth of a notorious liar. Nevertheless, a kind of men, of whom Locke observes that

they "know a little, presume a great deal, and thence rush to a conclusion," have accepted the statement, *bona-fide*; and they have most mystically speculated upon it. Mr. Creuzer is fortunate enough to find here seven sounds in an answer to seven vowels pronounced by the Egyptian priests. There is no ancient text, there is no inscription, which informs us that the Egyptian priests were in the habit of pronouncing seven vowels to the statue of Amenophis. Besides, the liar does not mention *seven sounds*, but *seven verses*.

The mutilation of the statue of Memnon, and its subsequent restoration, being established, it may be found interesting to consider that which has drawn the general attention of all ages upon this colossus, viz., its far-famed voice. The questions as to how the sound was produced, and why it has ceased, present themselves; nor have answers been wanting. It has been thought that it was produced by some trick of the priests, who employed the oracle for their own interest, and that it consequently ceased with the downfall of paganism. But though Memnon might be a Grecian god-head, he was by no means an Egyptian one. The interest which he excited, the reverence paid to him, was exclusively on the side of the Greeks and Romans. That native records should not mention the sound is not astonishing, since they mention nothing beyond the names of kings. But the vulgar report, that the statue of Memnon, had sounded since time immemorial, that the sound was indeed a part of its construction, must be sadly shaken by the reflection that none of the more ancient authors mention this phenomenon, which nevertheless was very fit to attract their attention. Strabo is, indeed, the first author who speaks of the sounding statue, for an allegation that Manetho, in a list of kings mentions "*Quem quidam Memnonem, putant, lapidem loquentem*," has been proved to be the "addition of later times, which, nevertheless, successfully imposed upon those who took Manetho's text from Josephus." It is true that silence does not always disprove a fact, but there are facts which by their very nature are disqualified for the silence of authors. The phenomenon of Memnon belongs to this class. Once discovered, it was the universal theme of the old authors, and Diodorus the Periegetian quotes of Thebes only her hundred gates, and Memnon saluting

his mother. If the phenomenon had existed before the Roman time, and indeed before Strabo, how then shall we explain that Herodotus and Diodorus of Sicily, both of whom visited Thebes, should have passed without mention that which afterward was considered the principal wonder of Egypt?

How are we to explain this obstinate silence of the Greek and Roman poets? Ovid, who says so much of the death of Memnon, of the sorrow of Aurora, of the tears she sheds every morning, and of the metamorphosis of her son's ashes into birds (*Metam.* xiii. 576), does not say one single word about the statue and its voice. Could he have refrained from mentioning the plaintive salute which Memnon breathes to his mother, when her first rays touch the black stone of which his statue is formed? When he says in his song,—

"Luctibus est Aurora suis intenta, piæque
Nunc quoque dat lachrymas et toto rorat in orbe."

could he have refrained from adding a feature to his picture which would have so materially heightened its pathos? And, on the other hand, from Strabo's time to the reign of Septimius Severus, there is scarcely an author or poet who does not expatiate on the miracle of the sounding stone. Strabo's account in itself is sufficient to prove that the phenomenon he witnessed was not known to him by fame; he is far from considering it with that enthusiasm which the reports and inscriptions of later travellers display. He says:—

"There are two monolithic colosses, one entire, and the other broken in the middle, as they say, by an earthquake. It is also thought that once a-day a noise, similar to that of a slight blow, proceeds from the part which is left on the pedestal. As for me, having proceeded to those parts with Aelius Gellius, I heard indeed this noise about the first hour. Did it proceed from the pedestal, or from the colossus, or from one of those who surrounded the statue?"

Thus, then, the two colosses had in Strabo's eyes almost the same importance; they both stood in the Libyan part of Thebes. The statue which they said to be sounding was not even distinguished by a particular name. So far was Strabo from connecting any religious ideas of his own with the sound he heard, that he rather believed the bystanders were practising upon his credulity. The inscrip-

* Heeren, *Ideen über die Politik*, ii. l. f. r. s. 232.

tions on the legs and the pedestal of the sounding statue strengthen this view of the case. From the dates we have reason to believe that the first were made in the times of Nero. Dion Chrysostom, speaking of some statues of the gods which bear no inscriptions, asserts: "And this is said to be the case with the colossus of Memnon." There is, indeed, only one inscription previous to his time, and this is dated from the ninth year of Nero's reign. But whatever inscriptions were afterward made, the names are invariably either Greek or Roman. The Egyptians, therefore, took no interest in the voice of Memnon, which was celebrated by the Greeks and Romans alone. This fact is important. It tends to prove that the vocal phenomenon did not excite attention till *after* the Roman conquest, since no inscription belonging to an earlier period can be found; that the phenomenon must have ceased in the time of Septimius Severus, as the most recent inscription, engraved on the legs, dates from this epoch, and as the pedestal, which offered so commodious a place for a number of inscriptions, contains only two, of which one belongs to the reign of Antoninus. And it proves further, that the Greeks alone made an object of adoration of the phenomenon, since they alone expressed their feelings of devotion to the divine author of the miracle. From this results the inevitable conclusion that the miracle was not produced by a pious fraud, for if such a fraud had been practised by the Egyptian priests (and they alone could have had the power to do it, and interest in doing it), the natives of Egypt would certainly have been more open to the imposition than strangers, and we should find their homage joining that of the Greeks. The Greek and Roman priests were even less likely to have practised this fraud. It requires, indeed, the gift of credulity to an extraordinary degree to believe that they, on a foreign soil, near an Egyptian temple, could have practised so gross and so dangerous an imposition; that during two centuries they could have imposed upon emperors, governors, generals, philosophers—in fact, on all influential persons of Greek and Roman extraction in Egypt. From all this we must draw the conclusion, that the miracle was based upon a cause which had no connection whatever with the will of either natives or foreigners, and that it was equally incomprehensible to both.

If we compare the time when the phenomenon of the sounding statue excited the attention of the world with that of its mutilation, we are struck with their exact correspondence. The first Grecian travellers found the Memnonia and ascribed them to Memnon, of whom their poets had sung so much; they must likewise have seen the two colosses on the plain of Thebes, but in the country of colosses they found nothing extraordinary in them. At Strabo's time, when the phenomenon and the mutilation were both comparatively recent, no name was given to the broken statue; but henceforward it acquired a great fame for its sound; foreign travellers came to see it, and the Greeks connecting the time in which the statue sounded the first hour of morning, with the slain son of the Goddess of Morning, declared this sounding statue to be that of Memnon, and amused themselves with the fancy that he saluted his mother. But strange to say, in the same manner that the reports about the sounding of the stone begin with the mutilation, so do they end with the restoration of the statue. The inscriptions are crowded within two centuries. They begin on a sudden; they cease in a similar manner. The miracle was gone, and the interest went with it. The charm was broken. Memnon had lost his voice. How, and when, did he lose it?

It must have been at the time when Christianity began to triumph over the persecutions of Paganism. Persecution and torture were unavailing against the new creed. The Pagans resolved to oppose miracles to miracles. A host of wonders arose from this competition; miraculous healings, resurrections, and a vast number of predictions, with which the writings of the later Pagans abound, and which we find refuted in those of the Fathers, were ushered into the world, and clamorously commented upon. New oracles were established, and others repaired and again brought to honor.

How precious would the voice of Memnon have been to this tribe of miracle-mongers! This daily manifestation of a Grecian deity, this miracle which admitted of the presence of so many witnesses, would in itself have proved of greater value than all those wondrous doings which even the Pagans were at pains to believe, and the celebrity of the colossus of Memnon would have increased with the violence of the controversies for which it

would have furnished the matter. But no, it is at this juncture that all homage ceases. The name of Memnon would seem to have passed away from the memories of men. It is to be found neither in the writings of the heathens, nor in those of the Fathers.

If we descend to the last efforts by which Julian vainly strove to raise agonizing Paganism, we behold this emperor repairing the altars of Daphne, and striving to infuse new life into the Egyptian worship by encouraging the discovery of a new Apis; but there are no endeavors to bring Memnon again to public notice. His voice had, doubtless, too long been silent: there was no hope of its revival. Only Hymerius the rhetor remembers it, a man who, never having been in Egypt, makes his senseless declamations, a medley of all he had found in books. But to appreciate the authority of such quotations, in which the mania of erudition common to all rhetors is glaringly displayed, it suffices to say that Hymerius makes Memnon recite *lyrical verses*.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a contemporary of Hymerius, gives a detailed account of Egypt. He scrupulously mentions the principal objects of curiosity in that country; he praises the Pyramids and the royal tombs of Thebes, but he makes no mention of Memnon.

Heliodorus, another contemporary of Hymerius, is profuse on the subject of the royal tombs and the Pyramids; but he speaks neither of Memnon nor of his voice.

St. Jerome, at the same time, held that Memnon had ceased to sound when Jesus Christ was born:—*Quippe cujus statua usque ad adventum Christi, sole oriente, vocem dare dicebatur. . . . Hoc autem significat, quod post adventum Christi omnia idola contionerunt*.* This opinion originates in the idea held by the principal Fathers of the Church, such as Origen, Tatian, Eusebius, S. Athanasius, S. Cyril, Theodoret, that the oracles of the idols, being the treacherous exhalations of the devil, were struck mute when the Savior of mankind came into the world.

We quoted the Emperor Septimius Severus as the presumptive restorer of the statue; it is in his reign that the reports of authors, and the inscriptions on the statue itself, ceased. We admitted in a former page that there is in reality

* St. Hieron. in cap. xiii. E. alic.

no ancient author who mentions the restoration of the statue, and that the proposition that the statue was repaired under Septimius Severus must rest solely upon the presumptive evidence of facts. We have seen the statue overlooked and disregarded while it remained entire; we have seen it commanding the attention of all, and the worship of some foreign nations, from the time it was broken. Of its reparation nothing is said. No inscription commemorates so important an event. The exclamations of joy, of astonishment, of veneration, at the voice proceeding from the mute stone, are suddenly and unexpectedly silent; we look for the cause, and we find the statue repaired but voiceless. Thus there is a connection between its integrity and its silence, between its mutilation and its sounding. This connection may also serve to explain why the reconstructor of Memnon did not think proper to immortalize his name by an inscription at the foot of the colossus, commemorative of the year of its restoration, as it has always been the custom of the Romans to do when they repaired a building or a statue. All the other visitors of rank, who witnessed the miracle, inscribed their names as a lasting record: Septimius Severus alone, the last emperor who visited Memnon, has left no trace indicative of his presence; and we should really be justified in doubting the authenticity of the fact, if Spartianus, his biographer, did not expressly state it: "*Et Memphim et Memnonem, et Pyramides et labyrinthum diligenter insepexit.*"* The reign of Septimius Severus fell into the time when Paganism, unable to exterminate Christianity by persecution, endeavored to conquer her in devotion; when the old temples were rebuilt, and new oracles cried into celebrity. Severus himself was a zealous Pagan, who re-established the worship of Serapis, which had once spread over all Egypt, and which had particularly flourished at Memphis and Thebes. It was to inspect the progress of this worship, Spartianus informs us, that the emperor travelled in Egypt: "*Jucundam sibi peregrinationem hanc propter religionem Serapidis. . . . Severus ipse postea semper ostendit.*"† The war of extermination between the two creeds was at its height, and it was impossible to be a zealous Pagan without being at the same time a declared enemy to Christianity. Severus did his best to suppress the

Christian religion by an edict issued in 202, when on the point of commencing his travels in Egypt. This edict forbids, under the most heavy penalties, to embrace the Jewish or Christian religion. Nor did his zeal slacken after he had once entered Egypt. The progress of Christianity in that country irritated him; he violently persecuted the Egyptian Christians; and this persecution extended even into the Thebais. We are informed that Severus did not hear the oracle, and although this was a not unfrequent occurrence, it is not difficult to imagine what impression the silence of what he considered a divine voice must have made upon the emperor. Enthusiastic for his creed, he had just witnessed the startling progress of a new and hostile religion, which he saw striking its roots into the very soil over which he had travelled to find Serapis and to adore Memnon. And this Memnon, whom to see, he had undertaken so long and wearisome a journey, did not utter his wonted salutation in the imperial pilgrim's presence. The god was certainly angry, and his anger was to be appeased. But how? The heresy which threatened his reign and arrogated his rights to itself, had, perhaps, excited his wrath. But then the emperor had persecuted the Christians—he persecuted them at the very moment. The statue of the god had been broken; it had been sacrilegiously mutilated (such was then the popular tradition) by the hands of the great defiler of sacred spots—by Cambyses the Persian. With its upper half, the statue had, perhaps, lost the best part of its voice; to repair it would improve the oracle. Filled with gratitude, the god would send forth a more melodious voice; perhaps he would utter real oracles. This was the train of reasoning most natural to the character and the circumstances of the man; nor is the hypothesis too bold, that he acted upon it and rebuilt the statue. It will be found to rest upon a chain of substantial evidence proceeding from the facts, and even the silence observed concerning the restoration of the statue, must serve to strengthen it. For it is to be presumed, that after the work was completed the promoter of it had reason to repent his zeal. When the massive blocks had been hauled up and fixed upon the broken part—when they had been shaped and chiselled—when Memnon was restored to that integrity which was to make him really the wonder of the universe and the glory

of the reign of Severus—his voice was silent. No sound saluted the rising of the morning sun. The oracle was spoiled.

The question as to the real cause of the sounds presents itself again. The opinion that they commenced with its origin, and were connected with some religious symbol, involved the proposition that the first makers of the statue had constructed in its interior an apparatus by which these sounds were produced. There have, indeed, been learned and grave men who have amused their fancies by the reconstruction of this imaginary mechanism. But whatever idea they may have formed in their minds, they could not evade the presumption of the colossus having been hollowed out in order to communicate with its mouth. This operation would have been attended with prodigious difficulties, and its impossibility must be clear to whoever considers the size and the material of the colossus. But if it be admitted that Memnon did not sound before the time of the Romans, the advocates of the common prejudice would be obliged to shift their ground, and to maintain that the vocal apparatus had been introduced into the massive stone about fifteen or twenty centuries after its original erection. This would be really absurd.

If, on the other hand, the sound had been produced by some exterior agency, the fraud must infallibly have been detected by the number of persons witnessing the phenomenon. The quality of Memnon's audience during the two hundred years of his sounding, ought not to be forgotten. Imperial officers, prefects, and emperors—people above the prejudices and superstitions of the crowd, listened to the voice, and unanimously admitted their ignorance of the cause by ascribing it to a god. There were certainly some skeptics among them, and it is known how dangerous these men are to the workers of miracles.

Let us admit for one moment that all these people might have been deceived, and that the secret was strictly kept; it must, then, be granted that there were some individuals who had an interest in practising the deception. But who were these? Not the Egyptian priests of Amenophis, for Strabo informs us that in his time no religious idea whatever was connected with the monument. Were they foreigners? Why should they have preferred the broken statue to the re-established colossus?

* Spart. in Severo, s. 17.

† Ibid.